

A special section produced and paid for by the South Florida Water Management District

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

WATER

Matters

Spring 2009



A REASON for
EVERY SEASON to
CONSERVE WATER in
your own BACKYARD

CALENDAR INSIDE!

GET TO KNOW US!

Stay informed about the region's water resources with this timely update from the South Florida Water Management District.



With outdoor water use accounting for up to half of household water consumed in South Florida, there are easy ways to conserve water to help protect our region's most valuable resource. Even with watering restrictions, you can maintain a healthy, drought-resistant lawn. This April through September calendar offers outdoor ideas for how to use water wisely each month – and all year long.

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BUG off!



april

Buy plants that are naturally resistant or tolerant to pests so that you can reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides. Poisons sprayed on plants eventually end up in rivers, lakes and streams when they run off lawns during heavy rains.



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mow BETTER



may



Don't cut your grass too short. But *do* cut it regularly, and be sure to use a sharp blade. Longer grass has more leaf surface to take in more sunlight. This enables it to grow thicker and develop a deeper root system. Longer grass also shades the soil surface, helping it to retain moisture and resist weed growth.



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turn it OFF



When it's raining, turn off your automatic sprinklers. Better yet, install a rain sensor that disables the automatic system until drier conditions return.

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Rise and SHINE



Water your lawn during the early morning hours when temperatures are cooler and wind speed is the lowest. This reduces evaporation and wasteful watering.


August



When choosing a fertilizer...

2% phosphorus or less is best.

get the DIRT on Fertilizer



A complete fertilizer contains nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Always look for 2% or less phosphorus – the number in the middle on the fertilizer bag. Also, check your soil before buying fertilizer because many Florida soils do not need any additional phosphorus.

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GO WILD!



September



Rainfall provides enough water for Florida's native plants to flourish in the wild. Plant these same colorful, drought-tolerant natives in your yard so that your plants survive during our drier months.

an extra bonus:

the butterflies that many of these plants attract are free!

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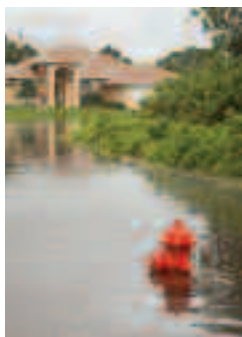
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Save this poster and use it as a calendar to remind yourself of ways you can save water outdoors. For more information, please visit www.savewaterfl.com



1949 – 2009

This year marks 60 years of managing water in South Florida. With rainfall extremes not a new phenomenon in our region, this timeline takes you back over the years to some of South Florida's noteworthy droughts.

1965

Lack of water becomes critical in Everglades National Park

Due to severe drought, alligator holes dry up and saltwater intrusion along coastal areas shrinks fish and wildlife habitats. Park officials dynamite holes out of limestone bedrock to provide adequate habitat for the animals. To provide relief, the Flood Control District implements an emergency water release schedule from Everglades Water Conservation Area 3. Only 5 percent of the alligator population survives the drought. In September, Hurricane Betsy floods the Everglades with 6 to 10 inches of rain.

1981

South Florida faces severe drought

Salt water encroaches into freshwater supplies, small lakes turn into puddles, and the air fills with smoke from the burning Everglades.

2001

A severe drought ends

Hurricane Gabrielle passes through Central Florida in the middle of September, bringing tropical rains that effectively end the severe drought gripping Central and South Florida for 10 months.

2006

Long-term water shortage begins

From January through November 2006, only 38 inches of rain falls on South Florida – a deficit of nearly a foot of average rainfall. The Upper Kissimmee region north of Lake Okeechobee receives only 29 inches of rain – more than 1.5 feet below average. The drought stretches through 2007 to create the driest year for Florida on record since 1938.

2008

Tropical Storm Fay brings relief to two-year water shortage

During one week in August, the District's 16 counties averaged more than 7.5 inches of rain, with 15 inches falling on some areas. Lake Okeechobee rises more than 2 feet. While Fay's rains provide relief from the 2006-2008 water shortage, the unpredictable nature of South Florida's rainfall extremes emphasizes the importance of adopting a year-round culture of water conservation.

From Navigation to Restoration

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF WATER MANAGEMENT

Florida was one of our nation's last frontiers. As recently as the early 1900s, the southern interior was a vast and foreboding swampland, largely inaccessible. With waterways as their highways, the earliest inhabitants' primary concern was navigation. After a series of severe and damaging hurricanes, the need for drainage and flood control became an immediate priority. The availability of fresh water then gained attention after severe drought conditions created critically low water levels.

To better control extreme water levels, the Florida Legislature created the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District in 1949. Over 60 years, the agency evolved from a single-purpose flood control district serving 800,000 people into the multifaceted South Florida Water Management District, the largest and oldest of the state's five water management districts. Today, the District marks six decades of service by providing flood protection while managing the water supply of 7.5 million people, improving water quality and restoring America's Everglades.

Restoration Progress Highlighted in New Report

On March 1, the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection released a comprehensive update detailing a year of scientific, engineering and restoration work to improve the environmental quality of America's Everglades and the entire South Florida ecosystem. The *2009 South Florida Environmental Report* is available online at www.sfwmd.gov/sfer



Recognizing that water conservation is the best strategy to meet growing demands on South Florida's limited water supply, the South Florida Water Management District continues the public process toward adopting year-round landscape irrigation conservation measures. The measures are one component of a broad Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, which is guiding efforts toward a lasting water conservation ethic throughout South Florida that will help sustain the regional supply. For more on water conservation, visit www.savewaterfl.com



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